



Media information

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**Canterbury quake donation
recognises Masterton's past**

The repair of Canterbury heritage buildings will be assisted by Masterton, a town which found itself in a similar position after a 7.2 magnitude earthquake 68 years ago.

The Masterton Trust Lands Trust has donated \$10,000 to assist with the repair, restoration and strengthening of heritage and character buildings damaged in Canterbury by the September 4 earthquake.

The Trust donation follows the announcement last week of a government contribution of up to \$10 million in addition to local funding for the same purpose.

“Our donation is recognition that Masterton went through a similar experience in the 1942 Wairarapa earthquake, one of the largest earthquakes recorded in New Zealand,” said Masterton Trust Lands Trust chairman, Alan Sadler. “We wanted to do something to help and as the government fund will match other contributions dollar for dollar, in effect our donation becomes \$20,000.”

There were remarkable similarities between the Wairarapa quake on 24 June 1942 and the one in Canterbury. The epicentre of the Wairarapa quake which struck at 11.16pm was close to Masterton's town centre and was felt as far away as Auckland and Dunedin.

An estimated 20,000 chimneys were damaged in Wairarapa and Wellington, with Masterton itself hardest hit. Collapsed masonry forced the closure of central Queen Street. Numerous buildings had to be partially demolished over the next few days with the assistance of troops encamped in the town.

Many shops had brick facades with ornate parapets and gable ends. These crashed into the street, taking with them the wooden verandahs that sheltered the footpaths and the electricity and telephone lines. Heavy roofs and water tanks collapsed. "Masterton lost many of its old and historic buildings and we would like to see as many as possible in Canterbury saved," said Mr Sadler.

In another similarity to the Canterbury quake, the Masterton one hit at night and only one life was lost. The earthquake also severely shattered the ground surface east of Masterton, along a narrow strip extending 65 km to the south.

A second shock measuring 7.0 on the Richter scale was recorded five weeks later on 2 August was deeper below the ground's surface. While it caused more damage, the second quake was less severe.

A further shock of magnitude 6.0 occurred on December 2, with its own set of aftershocks. Its epicentre was located 30km to the south of the June 24 epicentre and 20 km to the south of the August 1 event. A small number of chimneys were brought down to the east of Masterton and several in Wellington.

Several years later, many buildings in Wellington and Wairarapa were still unrepaired. This prompted the government to set up an Earthquake and War Damage Commission for earthquake insurance in 1944.